United Nations A/65/161

General Assembly

Distr.: General
22 July 2010

Original: English

Sixty-fifth session
Item 130 of the provisional agenda*
Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Implementation of General Assembly resolution 63/261 on the strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs

Report of the Secretary-General

Contents

		Page
I.	Introduction	2
	Enhanced human resources	3
II.	A more effective Department of Political Affairs	4
	A. Conflict prevention, mediation, and support to peace processes	5
	B. Backstopping field operations	7
	C. Working with resident coordinators and country teams	8
	D. Cooperation with regional organizations	9
	E. Electoral assistance	11
	F. Policy and Mediation Division	12
	G. Security Council affairs	13
III.	Challenges	13
	A. Management oversight	14
	B. Use of extrabudgetary resources	14
	C. External relations	15
	D. Funding and backstopping of special political missions	15
	E. Capacity of the Executive Office of the Department of Political Affairs	16
	F. Travel funds	16
IV.	Conclusion	16

* A/65/150.

10-46181 (E) 120810

Please recycle

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 63/261 on the strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs. In that resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a comprehensive report to it at its sixty-fifth session on the efficiency and effectiveness of the new structure in the implementation of mandates as well as programmatic delivery and improvements in the administrative and management processes and efficiency gains.

2. Working closely with national actors, the Department of Political Affairs is striving to become more proactive, agile and effective in addressing rising political tensions and emerging crises, and to deploy rapidly around the world to facilitate the peaceful resolution of emerging conflicts. Against this background, the Secretary-General, in his report on the revised estimates under section 1, Overall policymaking, direction and coordination, section 3, Political affairs, section 28D, Office of Central Support Services, and section 35, Staff assessment, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2008-2009 relating to the strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs (A/62/521), proposed to reconfigure the structure of the Department of Political Affairs to make it more responsive to the requests of Member States, and to that end to add capacities to make it more field-oriented, to further operationalize and professionalize conflict prevention and mediation, to allow for flexible responses to fast-evolving political situations, and to ensure better cooperation and liaison with Member States, regional organizations and other partners inside and outside the Organization. It was further noted that responsibilities had multiplied over the years without proportionate budgetary increases. To a significant degree, the Department relied on staff on temporary or extrabudgetary posts to carry out its core functions. The Department also realized the need to improve its effectiveness in several areas, including strategic planning, training, and management. For these reasons, an appeal was made to strengthen the Department of Political Affairs by increasing the number of staff by adding 101 new posts, largely at the P-2 and P-3 levels. The appeal also suggested the reorganization of its divisional structure by splitting the two transregional "mega divisions", the Asia and Pacific Division and the Europe and Americas Division, as well as by creating a new Division, a Policy Planning and Mediation Support Division.

3. In endorsing the thrust of the proposals of the Secretary-General contained in resolution 63/261, the General Assembly stressed the importance of improving the capacity of the United Nations to prevent and resolve conflict, recognizing that effective action by the Department of Political Affairs and its partners would help to avert tragedies, and save lives, humanitarian and peacekeeping dollars, and precious development gains.

4. By resolution 63/261, the General Assembly approved 49 out of the 101 requested posts and restructured the Department of Political Affairs by splitting the Asia and Pacific Division and the Americas and Europe Division, which resulted in a total of six regional divisions.[1] Table 1 shows how the 49 strengthening posts were distributed across the Department.

[1] By its resolution 63/261, the General Assembly established a new departmental substructure, including the creation of six regional divisions, namely, the Africa I Division, the Africa II Division, the Americas Division, the Asia and Pacific Division, the Europe Division, and the Middle East and West Asia Division.

Table 1
Strengthening posts by office or division of the Department of Political Affairs

Office or Division	*Strengthening staff*
Office of the Assistant Secretary-General (Africa)	1 (P-4)
Africa I Division	8 (3 P-4, 2 P-3, 1 P-2, 2-GS)
Africa II Division	6 (1 P-3, 4 P-2, 1-GS)
Middle East and West Asia Division	5 (1 P-5, 1 P-4 Iraq, 2 P-3, 1 P-2)
Asia and Pacific Division	4 (3 P-3, 1 P-2)
Americas Division	3 (1 P-5, 2 P-2)
Europe Division	1 (P-4 Cyprus)
Mediation Support Unit	7 (1 P-4, 3 P-3, 2 P-2, 1-GS)
Electoral Assistance Division	8 (1 P-5, 3 P-4, 4-GS)
Security Council Affairs Division	2 (P-2)
Executive Office	1 (P-4)
United Nations Liaison Office (Addis Ababa)	3 (P-3, P-5, 1-LL)

5. In resolution 63/261, the General Assembly requested that the Secretary-General submit an adjusted proposal before it would agree to the establishment of a Policy Planning and Mediation Support Division headed by a D-2 level director. In the context of the new biennial budget for 2010-2011, the Secretary-General submitted a new proposal to create a Policy and Mediation Division, which would synergize the work of the Department's policy planning, mediation support and regional organization units, allow proactive partnership development with agencies, funds and programmes and strengthen the Department's role as chair of the Executive Committee for Peace and Security. These proposals were endorsed by the General Assembly on 24 December 2009, in addition to the approval of the creation of Counter-Terrorism Task Force Office within the Department of Political Affairs, the Director of which reports to the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

Enhanced human resources

6. As of 21 July, 45 out of the 49 new posts have been filled. Every effort was made to ensure that these recruitments filled important gaps and bolstered underresourced areas. The Secretary-General concurred with the assessment made in the in-depth evaluation of the Department of Political Affairs by the Office of Internal Oversight Services that, in addition to adding staff, a qualitative transformation in the work processes of the Department was required to ensure the fulfilment of the mandates of the Department of Political Affairs. This implied, first and foremost, the need to accord priority attention to the development of a human

resources strategy for the Department, focusing on ensuring requisite skill sets for staff, training and mobility, as well as greater geographic diversity.

7. With this in mind, and prior to filling any of the new posts, the Under-Secretary-General undertook an analysis to examine the substantive, language, and technical skills that each unit would require in the medium to long term and taking into account the need for geographic and gender diversity. Recommendations for new staffing were then compared with the results of that analysis, to ensure the Department's competence across a broad range of issue areas.

8. In addition, the Office of Human Resources Management was engaged to conduct a review of working methods and other team dynamics; the Department of Political Affairs is now implementing the resulting recommendations internally. The Department also participated in several Six Sigma initiatives led by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support, including in the area of senior appointments. The Executive Office has also streamlined work procedures in travel, and extrabudgetary project management.

II. A more effective Department of Political Affairs

9. A strengthened Department of Political Affairs is better positioned to provide quality political analysis and recommendations on crisis situations and to develop coherent conflict-prevention strategies. It has provided more effective support and advice to the Secretary-General in the conduct of his day-to-day activities. It has put the United Nations in a position to engage more proactively with Member States, regional organizations and other stakeholders on fluid political situations and to participate in key meetings and negotiation sessions on specific country situations, at an appropriate level.

10. The consolidation and strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs has enabled management to devote more time to providing strategic guidance and ensuring greater complementarity with other United Nations departments and agencies and interaction within and between the divisions. The splitting up of the former Asia Division, which encompassed geopolitically diverse regions, into two leaner divisions, each focusing on a set of inter-connected countries, the Asia and Pacific Division and the Middle East and West Asia Division, has introduced a more rational organization and the ability to focus on coherent regional conflict prevention strategies. Similarly, the splitting up of the Europe and Americas Division has allowed the two new divisions to craft more focused agendas tailored to their respective regions and to interact more proactively with relevant Member States and regional organizations.

11. The Department of Political Affairs has increased its effectiveness and flexibility in responding to a range of prevention, peacebuilding and mediation challenges. The Department has significantly enhanced its support to political and peace processes, in particular by developing a professionalized mediation support capacity that enables rapid response to urgent requests for mediation.

12. The Department responded to an extraordinarily high number of requests for electoral assistance. Importantly, regional divisions have been enabled to participate in electoral assistance missions, complementing electoral advice with critical regional expertise.

13. The Department of Political Affairs also enhanced the political advice and guidance provided to representatives and envoys of the Secretary-General and improved its backstopping of the 11 political and peacebuilding missions led by the Department. Its divisions have increased their collaboration and enhanced synergies with other parts of the United Nations system, by establishing inter-agency working groups and task forces in support of its efforts in specific situations. The Department is also improving its engagement with resident coordinators and United Nations country teams, in particular in countries with rising political tension.

14. The Department has worked closely with Member States to deal with internal situations requiring the independence and credibility that only the United Nations can provide. Examples of this include the Commission of Inquiry into the facts and circumstances of the assassination of the former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto which was formed at the request of the Government of Pakistan, and the Department's ongoing support to the International Commission Against Impunity, which was provided at the request of the Government of Guatemala.

A. Conflict prevention, mediation and support to peace processes

15. Over the past year, the Department and its missions have been involved in good offices efforts in more than 30 cases, including Burundi, the Central African Republic, the five countries of Central Asia, Cameroon and Nigeria, the Comoros, Cyprus, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon, Fiji, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Ghana and the Gambia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), Honduras, Iraq, Lebanon, Madagascar, Mauritania, the Middle East peace process, Myanmar, Nepal, the Niger, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Sudan, Togo and Western Sahara. In 2009, the Policy and Mediation Division provided support in 19 cases.

16. The increase in resources has helped the Department's Divisions to focus on conflict prevention efforts by dedicating more time to developing comprehensive strategies that address the deep-rooted causes of conflict. In addition, the divisions have strengthened their joint assessments of situations requiring preventive action by increasing collaboration and enhancing synergies with other parts of the United Nations system.

17. One of the main drivers behind the endeavour to strengthen the Department of Political Affairs was the call for increased United Nations support for the efforts of African Member States and regional and subregional organizations to maintain peace and security on the continent. The reinforced Africa Divisions were able to respond effectively to urgent political crises in Mauritania, the Niger, the Comoros, Somalia and Guinea-Bissau, including by providing mediation support. In the immediate aftermath of the coup d'état in Madagascar, the Department deployed officers on the ground and established a small team at Headquarters to backstop the efforts of the United Nations Senior Political Adviser there. In Guinea, following the massacre of 28 September 2009, the Department-supported United Nations Office in West Africa played a key role alongside other international actors shaping developments that helped to avert the threat of civil war. The Department of Political Affairs also reinforced its support to the Office of the Special Envoy of the

Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, who played an important role in the conclusion of a key agreement between the parties, which, in turn, contributed to a rapprochement between Kinshasa and Kigali. The Department proactively supported mediation efforts in Darfur, including through joint visits to the mission area and participation in the work of the Joint Mediation Support Team that assists the joint African Union/United Nations facilitation. The Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara is now better supported in his quest to facilitate the peaceful resolution of the Western Sahara question, as are the mediation efforts of the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the territorial dispute between Equatorial Guinea and Gabon.

18. The Middle East and West Asia Division, too, has been able to dedicate greater and more attention at the senior level to country-specific issues since the splitting up of its transregional predecessor Division, effectively supporting United Nations efforts to stabilize, promote and strengthen peace in a number of countries, including Iraq, Lebanon, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The additional capacities have also helped the Division to strengthen its support to peacebuilding efforts in Central Asia, its engagement with the Member States of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and other countries as well as three regional organizations.

19. The now independent Europe Division improved its support to United Nations peacemaking efforts in Cyprus through strategic analysis and enhanced planning capacity at a pivotal time in the negotiations, achieving promising progress in key areas. Similarly, the Americas Division enhanced its substantive interaction with United Nations country teams and resident coordinators in the region, for instance allowing for helpful engagement during the Honduras crisis. It has also been able to support a reactivation of the Secretary-General's good offices with regard to the long-standing border controversy between Guyana and Venezuela.

20. A limited increase in capacity has enabled the Asia and Pacific Division to provide the Secretary-General with more effective support in his diplomatic engagement and efforts to promote the establishment of durable peace in Sri Lanka after three decades of conflict. The Division also works more closely with United Nations resident coordinators and United Nations country teams towards the consolidation of democratic gains and political stability in countries such as Bangladesh and Maldives.

21. Acting as a force multiplier for those who lead political processes is the Policy and Mediation Division; its expertise on the planning, procedural design, and technical issues of peace processes draw on its own internal capacities as well as external partnerships. The Division's standby team includes experts on security arrangements, constitutions, power-sharing, natural resources/wealth-sharing and gender. To provide just one example, in Central Asia, the Division assisted the Governments of the region in developing arrangements on joint management of shared water and energy resources.

22. To ensure close collaboration within the United Nations, the Policy and Mediation Division chairs two mediation focal point systems, one within the Department of Political Affairs and another that brings together 18 different United Nations departments, agencies and funds.

B. Backstopping field operations

23. The Department of Political Affairs now leads 11 political and peacebuilding missions in the field, 10 of which are funded through the special political mission provision of the regular budget.[2] While resolution 63/261 did not provide for new resources for backstopping missions, additional staff in other areas has allowed regional divisions to reallocate some capacities to fulfil the significant backstopping and support responsibilities that this entails, while also relying on extrabudgetary funds and support from the Department of Field Support.

24. The two Africa Divisions have provided higher quality support to field offices on the continent, including the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), the United Nations Integrated Office for Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB), and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL). Such support allows the missions to perform critical peace consolidation tasks. In Sierra Leone, for instance, it helped the mission to focus on follow-up to key political agreements, as well as conflict prevention and confidence-building measures, in preparation for the 2012 elections.

25. The Middle East and West Asia Division has enhanced its support to the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), including its engagement on security sector reform and other peacebuilding efforts based on substantive analysis and strategic planning. Considerable resources continue to be deployed in assisting the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO), the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL), and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA). And in the Asia-Pacific region, the fragile political situation and the impasse in the peace process in Nepal has necessitated increased attention and engagement from Headquarters and reinforced support to the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN).

26. In order to ensure coherent and coordinated headquarters support and policy guidance to its field presences and to promote integrated approaches with other parts of the United Nations system, in particular United Nations country teams, the Department of Political Affairs has established integrated task forces for all the countries in which the Department has complex missions on the ground. These task forces are mandated to consider all issues that have strategic significance or programmatic impact for the United Nations presence in the relevant country. The strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs has improved its ability to effectively coordinate United Nations system partners and exert leadership to ensure a coherent approach in the area of peace and security.

---

[2] The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon (UNSCOL), the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI), the United Nations Mission in Nepal (UNMIN), the United Nations Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in the Central African Republic (BINUCA), the United Nations Integrated Office for Guinea-Bissau (UNIOGBIS), the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL), the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB), the United Nations Office for West Africa (UNOWA) and the United Nations Regional Centre for Preventive Diplomacy for Central Asia (UNRCCA).

27. In the same vein, the Department has worked ever more closely with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on countries with peacekeeping operations, providing mediation and electoral support and political advice, in particular on regional dynamics. For instance, in close collaboration with the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Asia and Pacific Division has improved its engagement on Timor-Leste, and the Europe Division provided regional advice and political support to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in Kosovo. The Americas Division significantly increased its support of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations-led United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) in the aftermath of the 12 January 2010 earthquake in that country, monitoring regional political developments and providing analysis and support with regard to elections and constitutional reform. With respect to the Sudan, the Policy and Mediation Division supported the Joint Mediation Support Team for Darfur of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations with a cadre of experts supporting the Darfur mediation effort and provided planners from that Department working on the Darfur dossier with analysis on ceasefire implementation and management.

28. Revised Secretary-General's bulletins on the work of the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and of the Department of Field Support were released in late 2009 and early 2010[3] to better define the scope of each department's activities, how they interact, and how their respective divisions, units and offices support field missions and operations. The Secretary-General and the Under-Secretaries-General of the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Field Support continue to work closely together to ensure that the full range of capacities in all three departments are engaged effectively and efficiently, with a minimum of overlap, to attend to the peace and security challenges facing the United Nations today.

29. The completion of a service level agreement between the Department of Political Affairs and the Department of Field Support is critical and is being finalized. The agreement clarifies the respective roles of the two departments in support of field-based political missions funded through the special political mission provision of the regular budget.

C. Working with resident coordinators and country teams

30. In countries that are fragile or face political crises but in which there is no peacekeeping or political mission, the Department of Political Affairs engages closely with the United Nations country team on the ground as a critical part of the overall efforts of the United Nations to prevent conflict. The Department has made it a priority to strengthen its partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office on the prevention of armed conflict, under the strategic guidance of senior leadership from the two entities. In such situations the United Nations system is seeking to help national counterparts to develop the processes, institutions and skills necessary to effectively manage and resolve emerging challenges through dialogue, consultation, mediation and other peaceful means. Current efforts focus on an improved political support system for resident coordinators, including joint strategy

[3] ST/SGB/2009/13 and Corr.1, ST/SGB/2010/1 and ST/SGB/2010/2, respectively.

development, more systematic communication and joint analysis, training, as well as more timely and professional operational assistance and expertise.

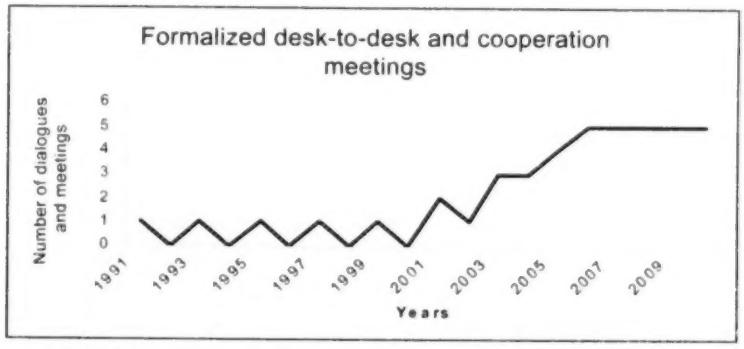
D. Cooperation with regional organizations

31. Today's crises and challenges require multifaceted solutions, making partnerships between the United Nations and regional organizations more vital than ever. In the course of the past decade, the United Nations has sought ever closer relations with regional and other organizations, visibly illustrated by co-deployments, joint mediation, and the recent conclusion of new cooperation agreements between the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the World Bank, the Collective Security Treaty Organization and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

32. The Secretary-General's retreat with Heads of Regional and Other Organizations held in January 2010 provided an important forum to discuss joint action to prevent and resolve conflict. The Department of Political Affairs leads a range of programmes and partnerships carried out under the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union launched in 2006. In addition, the Department is investing significant efforts in building subregional capacity in Africa, especially in the area of mediation. It also explored intensifying cooperation with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Caribbean Community. The Department of Political Affairs now runs formalized annual desk-to-desk dialogues or cooperation meetings with six regional organizations, in addition to regular informal meetings with a number of other regional and other organizations. It also organizes joint training sessions with a number of regional and other organizations on a broad range of peace and security issues.

Figure I

Formalized desk-to-desk and cooperation meetings with regional organizations led by the Department of Political Affairs



33. The new United Nations Office to the African Union, which has recently incorporated the strengthened United Nations Liaison Office, has taken a leadership role in moving forward the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme with the African Union, in particular in the area of peace and security. It also ensures close

on-the-ground cooperation and coordination with the African Union and subregional organizations with regard to evolving crises in Africa, in response to which African organizations are taking an increasing leadership role.

34. Efforts by the United Nations Liaison Office were complemented by the two strengthened Africa Divisions of the Department of Political Affairs which improved coherence between the preventive diplomacy/peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities of the African Union and the United Nations, on the continent, not least as a result of more effective and cohesive interaction between the United Nations and African Union secretariats. The Department of Political Affairs is supporting African Union efforts to develop a mediation strategy and has engaged more proactively with the secretariats of the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Panel of the Wise. It helped establish a consultative desk-to-desk mechanism with the African Union on prevention, control and resolution of conflicts and it helped the African Union to set up a database for electoral observers and experts for the African Union's Democracy Electoral Assistance Unit.

35. The Department of Political Affairs has further strengthened collaboration and partnerships with subregional organizations and the regional economic communities. For instance, at the request of the secretariat of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the Department has mobilized extrabudgetary resources to work closely with SADC to develop its conflict prevention and mediation capacity. A similar initiative is under way in support of the Economic Community of Central African States, under which the Department of Political Affairs, in close coordination with the Community, is pursuing the establishment of a new regional office in Libreville to increase its attention to conflict prevention in Central Africa. Furthermore, the Department is exploring the request by the secretariat of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to assist in the implementation of the 2006 Pact on Security, Stability and Development in the Great Lakes Region. The Department is working with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development to implement a subregional security strategy in the Horn of Africa. In West Africa, the United Nations regional office helped to forge innovative relationships with the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States to address a range of political crises in the subregion. The Department, in close collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, also played a key role in moving forward the West Africa Coast Initiative aimed at supporting the efforts of the Economic Commission of West African States to address illicit drug trafficking and organized crime.

36. In the Americas Division, the establishment of the Caribbean team has spurred the Department of Political Affairs to create a strategic framework for, and strengthen cooperation between, the United Nations and the Caribbean Community. Cooperation with the Organization of American States has been enhanced through two desk-to-desk meetings, covering current and potential activities. A newly focused Europe Division concentrated new energy on strengthening relations, in particular with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union, on prevention and peacebuilding, including through senior-level visits and desk-to-desk dialogues.

37. The Asia and Pacific Division has been able to conduct more in-depth analyses of emerging developments in South-East Asia in the context of the new Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the regional body's evolving role in peace and security. The Division engaged more systematically with both ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum. Working with the Department's Mediation Support Unit, the Division is exploring ways in which it can enhance the United Nations ability to support national and regional peacemaking and preventive initiatives.

38. The Middle East and West Asia Division has strengthened its collaboration and partnerships with the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Gulf Cooperation Council and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

E. Electoral assistance

39. In his role as the focal point for United Nations electoral assistance activities, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs is supported by the Electoral Assistance Division, which assists with the design and staffing of United Nations electoral activities, provides ongoing technical guidance and maintains both the roster of electoral experts and the Organization's electoral institutional memory. The demand from Member States for electoral assistance remains high; they have recognized the need for strengthening democratic processes, electoral institutions and national capacity-building and have requested the United Nations to continue to provide technical advice and other assistance to requesting States and electoral institutions in order to strengthen their democratic processes (General Assembly resolution 64/155).

40. The strengthening of the Department of Political Affairs has enabled the Electoral Assistance Division to be more effective, including to (a) respond more rapidly and effectively to continued high demand for assistance; (b) expand and diversify the roster of electoral experts; and (c) enhance coherence within the United Nations and coordination with regional organizations.

41. The additional posts allowed for an effective response to the more than 40 electoral projects existing at the time of writing of the present report, as well as 17 new requests received in 2010. Importantly, they enabled a more rapid response to several urgent needs in countries such as Afghanistan, Algeria, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea, Haiti, Kyrgyzstan, Papua New Guinea and the Sudan. Moreover, the regional divisions of the Department of Political Affairs now have increased capacity to contribute political analysis and advice to electoral missions, focusing on efforts to prevent election-related violence. For instance, the Africa Divisions participated in electoral missions in Benin, Burundi, the Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea-Bissau, Malawi, Mauritania, Togo, Uganda and Zambia. The Middle East and West Asia Division helped to support preparations for recent elections in Iraq, Lebanon and several other countries. The Asia and Pacific, Europe and Americas Divisions also participated in electoral support efforts.

42. Additional staffing allowed the Electoral Assistance Division to put the roster into a modern database, as recommended by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, thereby allowing the Division to identify more efficiently and speedily suitable candidates for posts in field missions, while ensuring geographic and gender balance (for instance, the roster saw a 60 per cent increase in candidates from the African continent).[4] Deployment on temporary contracts or contractual arrangements is now much faster and thus more effective.

43. The Division has been able to place additional focus on ensuring a "one-United Nations" approach to the provision of electoral assistance. Among other initiatives, the Department of Political Affairs now chairs an Inter-Agency Coordinating body on Election Assistance (which includes UNDP, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Department of Field Support and others); and a new note of guidance between UNDP and the Department of Political Affairs outlining respective roles is being finalized. Contacts and coordination have increased with non-United Nations partners; a good example being the current efforts being undertaken with OAS, numerous Member States and NGOs to support the elections in Haiti.

F. Policy and Mediation Division

44. A newly created Policy and Mediation Division has improved the ability of the Department of Political Affairs to lead and inform policy development across a range of prevention, peacebuilding and mediation challenges and to support and backstop desk officers and field missions. In its various roles, The Division is careful not to duplicate, but rather to support, the work of regional divisions and other actors.

45. Increased capacity has positioned the Policy and Mediation Division to support more effectively the Department's conflict prevention mandate by distilling best practices, developing tools, and acting as a catalyst for operational conflict prevention, including by expanding the Department's networks of prevention practitioners across the United Nations system, in regional organizations, the World Bank, academic institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

46. Drawing on the experience of its field missions, The Division leads the Department's efforts to constructively contribute to system-wide efforts to improve United Nations peacebuilding mechanisms, with particular emphasis on the implementation of the 2009 report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict (A/63/881-S/2009/304).

---

[4] The Office of Internal Oversight Services compared 2006 with 2009 data with regard to regional representation and found a significant increase in the number of experts from Africa from 15 to 24 per cent; this now constitutes the second largest group behind the experts from Western Europe, which remains unchanged at 32 per cent. The number of experts from North America has decreased from 22 to 18 per cent, as has the number from Asia/Pacific (decreasing from 13 to 11 per cent), and Central and South America (decreasing from 10 to 7 per cent). The number of experts from Eastern Europe increased slightly from 5 to 6 per cent, while the share of experts from the Middle East decreased from 2.3 to 1 per cent. The share of female electoral experts in the roster overall stayed at 29 per cent between 2006 and 2009.

47. In its capacity as Chair of the Working Group of the Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force on preventing and resolving conflict, the Policy and Mediation Division, in collaboration with Member States and regional organizations, helps to address conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism, outlined in pillar I of the United Nations Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy. The Division now has modestly increased capacity to carry out country-specific and region-specific projects in this area. One such example is Central Asia, where the Working Group and UNRCCA are engaged in a project to assist five Member States in developing a regional action plan on the implementation of the Strategy.

48. The Division is helping the Department as well as United Nations and non-United Nations entities to devise innovative policy responses to emerging peace and security issues. Currently, the Division is focusing on issues such as unconstitutional changes of government, transnational drug trafficking and management of scarce natural resources.

49. The Policy and Mediation Division is also allowing the Department to make significant strides in strengthening its institutional learning processes. The Department now has a system of developing, approving and disseminating internal guidance, and has produced guidelines in such critical areas as the support of special political missions. Reflecting the need to ensure better coherence between political field missions and United Nations country teams, the Department has been able to contribute to system-wide policymaking on integrated approaches through the active participation in the inter-agency and interdepartmental bodies such as the integrated mission planning process Working Group and the Integration Steering Group.

G. Security Council affairs

50. The Security Council Subsidiary Organs Branch in the Security Council Affairs Division provides substantive support to 11 Security Council sanctions committees and 7 sanctions monitoring groups. The Branch also services the Counter-Terrorism Committee and the 1540 (2004) Committee, and processes de-listing requests submitted by petitioners (individuals and entities on sanctions committee lists) pursuant to Security Council resolution 1730 (2006). The additional resources have allowed the Branch to manage the growth in committees and monitoring groups, both in terms of numbers and expanding mandates.

51. The resources have also enabled the Branch to provide critical assistance to the Al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee as it embarked on the complex undertaking of conducting its review of 488 individuals and entities included on its sanctions list. Additional human resources have also provided enhanced support to the Panel of Experts on the Sudan and increased the Branch's capacity to process and maintain easy to analyse records of de-listing requests submitted by petitioners pursuant to resolution 1730 (2006).

III. Challenges

52. General Assembly resolution 63/261 greatly improved the capacity of the Department of Political Affairs to deliver on its core mandated activities. However, the fact that only half of the originally requested posts were approved by the

General Assembly means that the Department continues to operate with insufficient capacity in a number of areas, requiring it to rely on extrabudgetary and other ad hoc arrangements.

A. Management oversight

53. The Secretary-General had proposed the establishment of six regional divisions, each headed by a director at the D-2 level and a deputy director at the D-1 level to ensure maximum oversight, representation and coverage. However, the General Assembly decided that two of those divisions (the Americas Division and the Asia and Pacific Division) should be headed only by D-1s and one division (the Europe Division) headed by a D-2 with no D-1 to provide the necessary backup. The lack of consistency across the six regional divisions remains a major problem in the Department's engagement with Member States and regional and subregional organizations, and hampers managerial oversight.

B. Use of extrabudgetary resources

54. Given the fact that the resources approved were less than half of what had been requested, the Department of Political Affairs must continue to rely, to a significant degree, on extrabudgetary resources, to effectively implement the vision laid out in resolution 62/521, particularly in the area of rapid response.

55. Since 2009, the Department has transformed its trust fund architecture and introduced new funding windows and fast-track procedures designed to support quick action as political and security crises arise. Learning from best practices in the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other agencies, funds and programmes, the Department introduced improvements in the management of extrabudgetary resources, launching its first annual appeal in 2010. This provided a more strategic approach to resource mobilization in support of the Department's overall priorities, focusing on five clusters: flexible funding for rapid response in mediation and conflict prevention; flexible funding for rapid response in election-related activities; funding in support of special envoys and special political missions; support to strategic partnerships in particular with regional organizations; and support to capacity-building and professionalization of the Department. Reliance on extrabudgetary resources brings its own difficulties, of course, and the current appeal remains seriously underfunded.

56. The Department has also developed a framework for monitoring and evaluation to increase the accountability for the management and administration of resources. In addition, has established guidelines and a database for the management of extrabudgetary funds. However, it continues to rely on extrabudgetary resources to properly implement the new framework and perform thorough self-evaluations and focus on the improvements of its regular budgetary programme delivery, as called for in resolution 63/261.

C. External relations

57. Effectively managing external communications — strategy and messaging — is critical to the overall political work of the United Nations and an essential part of successful peacemaking and preventive diplomacy. The Department of Political Affairs has difficulty meeting basic requirements, owing to the lack of any dedicated in-house capacity. Continued reliance on ad hoc arrangements hampers the Department's ability to communicate effectively in support of peace processes and political missions and to promote the importance of United Nations preventive action as a cost-effective means of managing crises and engaging with Member States.

D. Funding and backstopping of special political missions

58. A critical United Nations capability that continues to lack effective support and funding modalities are field missions funded through the special political mission provision of the regular budget. The fact that these missions are funded from the regular budget and, unlike peacekeeping missions, do not enjoy pre-mandate commitment authority, delays and complicates their establishment, and leads to corresponding recruitment and rapid deployment, logistics and procurement problems. Furthermore, funding procedures do not provide for a headquarters capacity to backstop these missions (which includes strategic planning and assessment, coordination with regional and subregional organizations and groups of friends, support for integration with United Nations country teams, and reporting requirements to intergovernmental bodies). They also undermine the Department's capacity to quickly respond to Security Council mandate changes and in-country political transitions.

59. The Security Council increasingly relies on and mandates political field missions to support peace processes (UNMIN), to work with multinational forces in very insecure environments (UNPOS and UNAMI), and to protect peacekeeping investments (BINUB and UNIPSIL). The Department of Field Support, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Political Affairs have worked hard to improve collaboration and mutual institutional support. Member States have also made considerable investments in rapidly deployable capacities to support peacekeeping operations, in particular in the areas of security sector reform, corrections and policing, as well as the services of the Office of the United Nations Ombudsman. Yet, current budgeting modalities still deny field missions led by the Department of Political Affairs easy access to those capacities because of a lack of a support account.

60. A flexible mechanism should be developed to provide the United Nations system with the requisite and variable capacity to adequately backstop and manage political missions in line with their size and mandate, including a modest equivalent to the peacekeeping pre-mandate commitment authority. As noted in the updated report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict, these proposals and options will be brought up at the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

E. Capacity of the Executive Office of the Department of Political Affairs

61. The General Assembly established three positions (1 P-3 and 2 GS) funded from general temporary assistance to strengthen the Executive Office's ability to administer missions led by the Department of Political Affairs funded through the special political mission provision of the regular budget. The much-needed resources have enabled the Executive Office to better provide support to the 12 special political missions it currently administers.[5]

62. However, pressures continue to grow. For instance, an additional 6 posts and 15 experts and consultants were approved in 2010 for special political missions, an increase of 30 per cent from the 2009 budget. Moreover, with the growth of the Department by 49 additional staff, the day-to-day human resources requirements of administering 275 staff (excluding staff attached to the special political missions) has increased, with no additional regular budget capacity. This will need to be addressed in the context of the 2012-2013 regular budget cycle.

F. Travel funds

63. Given the transformation of the Department of Political Affairs and the increased demand for its services, assistance and rapid, on-the-ground response to a range of emerging political challenges, there is an acute lack of funding for travel under the regular budget allocation for the Department, especially since travel to accompany the Secretary-General accounts for 18 per cent of the expenditures. The regular budget covers only about a third of the Department's real travel costs, forcing it to resort to extrabudgetary funding in order to cover the travel that is necessary to carry out its mandates.

IV. Conclusion

64. The decision of the General Assembly to strengthen the Department of Political Affairs has reinforced the Department's ongoing transformation into a more proactive and operational platform for conflict prevention, mediation and peacebuilding. The Secretary-General is encouraged by the growing recognition by Member States and regional organizations both of the importance of investing in conflict prevention and the Department's ability to respond quickly and in a cost-effective manner to emerging crises. This, in turn, has led to an increased

[5] The cluster I and cluster II special political missions administered by the Executive Office are: Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Myanmar, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General for Western Sahara, Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for the implementation of Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), Monitoring Group concerning Somalia and Eritrea, Panel of Experts on Liberia, Group of Experts on Côte d'Ivoire, Group of Experts on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Panel of Experts on the Sudan, Panel of Experts on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1526 (2004) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities, and the Panel of Experts on the Islamic Republic of Iran.

demand for the Department's services in prevention, mediation, and capacity-building.

65. The Secretary-General is very grateful to Member States for the political and financial support they have extended to the Department of Political Affairs, through resolution 63/261 and beyond. He looks forward to continuing the conversation with Member States on how to further implement his vision of a Department of Political Affairs that is more operational, agile and effective in its responsibilities, especially through improvements in establishing, supporting, and funding special political missions.